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THE AMERICAN ORTHODOX CHURCHES AND CLERGY IN THE 21st CENTURY

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Introduction

In 1794, the foundation of a mission on Kodiak Island in Alaska by the Orthodox monks from Russia marked the entrance of Orthodox Church in America. Two centuries later, the presence of over one million faithful gathered into more than 2,400 local parishes bears witness to the firm establishment of Eastern Christianity in the US.

The notion of "one state - one Church" was historically very characteristic of Orthodox Christianity. When the Orthodox Church is mentioned, one tends to think of its ethnic aspect, and when Orthodox Christians are asked about their religious affiliation, they almost always add an ethnic qualifier: Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, etc. Consequently, many Orthodox Churches — Byzantine and Oriental alike — that have faithful in the United States have organized their own jurisdictions in North America: the individual "ethnically based" parishes were later united into centrally administrated dioceses subordinated to the "Mother Churches" in the Old World. The original goal of American Orthodox jurisdictions was clear: to minister to the religious needs of the diverse immigrant ethnic communities: the Greeks, Russians, Serbians, Romanians, Armenians, Copts, etc. There is no doubt that for the first generation of immigrants these ethnically based Orthodox jurisdictions brought a big measure of order and unity to ethnic groups that otherwise would have remained fragmented and enfeebled in an "American melting pot".

Today, most Orthodox jurisdictions in the United States are still

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Table 1: Orthodox Churches in the United States (data as of 2001)

Major Byzantine and Oriental Orthodox jurisdictions in the USA	Status (1) and relation to "Mother" Churches abroad	Administrative center(s) in USA	Number of parishes (3)	Number of monastic communities	Estimated number of adherents (4)
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America	Eparchy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople	New York, NY	525	18	550.000 – 650.000
Orthodox Church in America (OCA). OCA consists of 8 regular territorial dioceses, and semi-autonomous Albanian Archdiocese, Bulgarian diocese, and Romanian *episcopate*	Until 1970, a Metropolia of the Russian Orthodox Church. Since 1970, an autocephalous (fully independent) US based Church.	Syosset, NY	450	15	115.000 – 120.000
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	Part of the Patriarchate of Antioch	Englewood, NJ	210	0	85.000 – 90.000
Serbian Orthodox Church in the USA	Part of the Serbian Orthodox Church	Alhambra, CA Libertyville, IL Edgeworth, PA	78	3	55.000 – 60.000
Serbian Orthodox Church: New Gracanica Metropolitanate	Part of the Serbian Orthodox Church	Grayslake, IL	40	2	N/d
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA	Autonomous Church under Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople	Bound Brook, NJ	106	0	30.000
American Carpatho- Russian Greek Catholic Diocese	Autonomous Church under Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople	Johnstown, PA	76	1	20.000
Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and Canada	Part of the Romanian Orthodox Church	Detroit, MI	14	0	6.000 – 7.000
Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Diocese of the USA	Part of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church	New York, NY	9	0	4.000 – 5.000

Albanian Orthodox Diocese in America	Autonomous part of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America	Las Vegas, NV	2	0	500
Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church	Part of the Russian Orthodox Church (Patriarchate Moscow)	New York, NY:	33	0	N/d
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia	Independent church of irregular status. Split from the Russian Orthodox Church (Patriarchate Moscow) in 1920(2)	New York, NY	128	5	N/d
Parishes of Macedonian Orthodox Church in the USA	Part of the Macedonian Orthodox Church (irregular status)	Syracuse, NY	16	1	14.000 – 15.000
Holy Orthodox Church in North America	Independent church of irregular status. Nominally affiliated with the True Orthodox Christian Church in Greece	Roslindale, MA	25	6	1.800 – 2.000
Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East	Part of the Holy Apostolic Assyrian Church of the East	Chicago, IL	18	0	35.000 – 40.000
Armenian Church of America (Catholicossate Etchmiadzin)	Part of the Armenian Apostolic Church – Catholicossate Etchmiadzin	New York, NY Los Angeles, CA	89	0	45.000 – 50.000
Armenian Apostolic Church of America (Catholicossate Cilicia	Part of the Armenian Apostolic Church – Catholicossate Cilicia	New York, NY Los Angeles, CA	38	0	23.000 – 25.000
Coptic Orthodox Church: Archdiocese of North America	Part of the Coptic Orthodox Church	Cedar Grove, NJ	116	1	N/d
Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch	Part of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch	Teaneck, NJ Burbank,CA	23	0	15.000 – 16.000
Malankara Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church	Autonomous church under Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch	Nanuet, NJ	22	0	4.000 – 5.000
American diocese of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church	Part of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church	Bellerose, NY	59	0	13.000 – 15.000

(Source: Krindatch 2002: 536-539)

"N/d" – no data available.
(1). In addition to the widely and mutually recognized Byzantine and Oriental Orthodox Churches, there are numerous Orthodox Churches of irregular status. They are of Orthodox origin and hold to Orthodox theology and liturgical practice, but because of various reasons the other Orthodox Churches do not recognize them, qualifying them as "non-canonical," "unlawful," "schismatic," etc.
(2). In November of 2006, Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate issued mutual statement "About Restoration of Canonical Relations." This statement proclaimed their reconciliation and mutual recognition and laid out the process of their gradual reunification into one Church.
(3). Parishes are defined as all places of regular worship of a group of faithful permanently living in the area. The figures in this column include also the so-called missionary parishes – i.e. those recently established and without permanent priest assigned to them.
(4). "Adherents" – are generally defined as baptized Orthodox Christians, who are known to the local parish and attend church services several times a year (at least by major celebrations such as Easter, etc.). The category of "adherents" includes both adult Orthodox Christians and their children. For more information on enumeration of adherents in American Orthodox Churches see (Jones 2002: 534).

related (with various degree of autonomy) to one of the "Mother" Orthodox Churches overseas. Table 1 shows that by the beginning of the third millennium, the institutional composition and administrative structure of Eastern Christianity is layered, because the networks of dioceses and parishes belonging to the mutually independent Orthodox jurisdictions co-exist and overlap on the same territory.

Historical context

With few exceptions (Russians, Greeks), the first parishes of most Orthodox jurisdictions were founded in North America around the turn of the 20th century, prior to WWI.

The unifications of these initially autonomous parishes into centrally administrated dioceses with US-based headquarters occurred 20 to 30 years later, between the two World Wars. During the 20th century, several developments contributed to the creation of a particular niche that Orthodox Christianity occupies in the diverse American religious landscape.

Firstly, immigration originating from the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the Middle East dramatically increased the total

number of Orthodox faithful in America. In 1903, there were no more than 50,000 Eastern Christians in the US (Erickson 1999; Summary 1999). Today, even modest estimates suggest the figure of at least one million Orthodox believers living in the US (Krindatch 2002; Jones 2002:xiv).

Secondly, the institutional composition of Orthodoxy in North America has become much more complex. At the beginning of the 20th century, in 1906, the Byzantine Orthodox Churches were represented by 74 parishes (including 16, in Alaska) united in what was then called the "Missionary Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church in North America". The Missionary Diocese included seven parishes of the Syro-Arab mission serving the Orthodox Christians from the Middle East and six parishes of the Serbian mission (Summary 1999). In addition to the Russian Missionary Diocese there were a handful (five in 1900) of dispersed independent Greek and Romanian Orthodox parishes (Erickson 1999). Of Oriental Orthodox Churches, only the Armenian Apostolic Church was present in the USA at the turn of the 20th century, numbering five to six parishes united in 1898 to form a diocese. As Table 1 shows, Eastern Christianity in North America today represents a phenomenon of great jurisdictional diversity.

Thirdly, from the geographically limited areas of Alaska (comprising Russian colonists and native Alaskan converts to Orthodoxy), California (Russians and Greeks in San Francisco, Serbians in Jackson, Armenians in Fresno), the coal mines and steel centers of Pennsylvania (Serbians, Carpatho-Russians — also known as Ruthenians, Rusyns — who immigrated to the United States from the Carpathian mountain regions of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire), Massachusetts (early Armenian settlements in Cambridge, Watertown, Worcester) and a few further urban centers (Greek communities in New York, Chicago, Boston; the Arab Orthodox community in New York; the Romanian community in Cleveland, Ohio; Albanians in Boston; etc.), the Orthodox Christians spread and settled all across the country. During last twenty years the most dynamic growth of Orthodox parishes and population was in the southern and western parts of the US.

Fourthly, the ethnic diversity of Orthodox immigrants living in the US increased greatly during the last century. The newest groups of Orthodox Christians in America are the Copts (the Arabic-speaking Oriental Orthodox Christians from Egypt) and the Malankara Oriental

Orthodox Christians from India (mainly from Kerala state). Whereas in 1971 there were only three compact Coptic communities in the US (Jersey city, Los Angeles, and Brooklyn), by the beginning of the third millennium more than 115 parishes of the Coptic Orthodox Church were organized across the country. Similarly, 35 years ago, only two small Malankara Orthodox parishes existed in the US (both in the New York area), but today more than 81 parishes belong to two various Malankara Orthodox jurisdictions with their headquarters in Nanuet, NJ and in Bellerose, NY.

Hence, the patterns of development of the Orthodox jurisdictions in North America are closely connected with the history of ethnically diverse communities of Orthodox immigrants who came to the US for various reasons, at different times, and from many countries of Central and Eastern Europe and from the Middle East. Because of this, and due to the linkage to the Mother Churches overseas, the Orthodox jurisdictions in the US were always affected by the political, social and religious transformations in the Old World. The Communist revolution of 1917 in Russia resulted in the formation on US territory of the three Orthodox jurisdictions that all have historic roots in the Russian Orthodox Church. These are the Orthodox Church in America (until 1970, it was a *Metropolia* of the Russian Orthodox Church), the Russian Orthodox Church outside of Russia and the Patriarchal parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church. Following the publication of a 1929 Papal Decree that limited the freedom and independence of the Uniate Greek-Catholic Churches, about 25,000 Uniates based in Johnstown, PA, left the Greek-Catholic Church and converted to Orthodoxy. These Carpatho-Russians have formed their own Orthodox jurisdiction: the Carpatho-Russian Greek Catholic Diocese of the US, which is under canonical protection and supervision of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. The establishment of the Communist regime in Armenia, one of the former USSR republics, caused a political split among Armenian Orthodox parishes in North America in 1933. Some of them remained true to the Mother Church in Armenia and formed two American dioceses subordinated to the Catholicossate of Etchmiadzin (Armenia). Other Armenian parishes maintained that the new Communist authority manipulated the Church and its leaders: they reassigned themselves to the spiritual supervision of the Armenian Catholicossate of Cilicia (Lebanon). Later, WWII brought sweeping political changes in Eastern Europe: the newly established Communist

governments in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Romania have limited and supervised all church activities. This new situation had important consequences for the Orthodox Churches in the United States. Similarly to the Russians in the 1920s and the Armenians in the 1930s, the Serbian, Bulgarian and Romanian Orthodox dioceses also divided in the 1950s and 1960s along political lines and into hostile factions. In 1958, in former Yugoslavia, the Macedonians separated from the Serbs to form their own "Macedonian Orthodox Church". Subsequently, as from 1963, an increasing number of the Macedonian Orthodox parishes appeared in the American religious landscape. The persecution in Greece in the 1950s of the so called "Old Calendarists" — the members of the radical conservative and anti-ecumenical "True Orthodox Church of Greece" — and the general resumption of large-scale emigration from Greece in the late 1960s brought significant numbers of the Old Calendarists to the US. They founded their own Orthodox jurisdictions in North America, such as the Holy Orthodox Church in North America.

As a result, there today exist several "duplicated" American Orthodox jurisdictions (Russian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Albanian, Armenian), which share the same historic origin, ethnic ancestry and cultural heritage, yet are separated from each other by inveterate political divisions.

For most of the 20th century, it was common for the Orthodox Christians in the United States to view themselves as the ethnic communities dispersed from the motherland. The same perspective colored the understanding of the nature of the Orthodox Churches in North America: each Orthodox jurisdiction came to see itself as a "diaspora" Church and, to a great degree, as a geographic extension of the Mother church.

Consequently, instead of being a Church serving the American people, the purpose of each Orthodox jurisdiction was to care primarily for "its people". Along with social assistance intended to help the new immigrants to begin a new life in the US, many Orthodox jurisdictions gave high priority to the preservation of the original ethnic culture and identity among their members. This was done in several ways.

- By retaining in the churches the language of the mother country, instead of using English.
- By setting up all-day schools (also called "parochial" schools) for

children of immigrants born in the US as an alternative to the regular American public schools (the significant number of all-day schools is especially characteristic of the Greek and Armenian ethnic communities).
- By organizing a system of afternoon schools that exist separately from the religious Sunday-schools and that teach the language, history, literature and geography of the mother country one day per week. The parishes of the Greek, Ukrainian, Syrian, Armenian (both jurisdictions), the Malankara Orthodox Churches and of the Russian Orthodox Church outside of Russia have the densest networks of such one-day schools.
- By the various policies intended to discourage, or even, restrict mixed inter-Christian marriages.

The situation of ethnically-diverse Orthodox jurisdictions in the context of the American mainstream society in the 20th century is brilliantly characterized by Orthodox historian Mark Stokoe: "In externals, Orthodox Christians in North America resemble Roman Catholics. They share a similar sacramental view of life; liturgical forms of corporate worship; traditional forms of piety such as fasting, prayer, monasticism; and generally 'conservative' positions on contemporary moral issues. In administration, the Orthodox in North America resemble Protestants and are splintered into distinct administrative 'jurisdictions,' divisions based on ethnic origin and politics, both secular and ecclesiastical. In self-identity, however, Orthodox Christians in North America are like Orthodox Jews; a people apart, unable and at times unwilling to separate the claims of race, religion, and politics: people for whom the Greek terms 'diaspora' ('dispersion') has been an expression of enduring meaning" (Stokoe 1995:2).

This ethnocentric approach typical of American Orthodoxy for most of the 20th century had three consequences:

- Movements toward greater ecclesiastical and administrative unity of the different jurisdictions were discouraged by those who saw the Orthodox Church as an instrument to preserve not only religious faith, but also a particular ethnic identity, culture and language.
- There was little concern for mission and outreach. The emphasis that the Orthodox jurisdictions placed on "cultural"

survival and preservation appeared to be incompatible with a commitment to reaching out to others who were not a part of their ethnic communities.
- The Orthodox Churches felt no responsibility to the wider society, because each jurisdiction tended to see itself as composed of people who were not really part of mainstream America.

However, starting in the 1970s, the fundamental changes in the membership of American Orthodox Churches (in particular, the dominance of the second, third, or fourth generations of American-born members and the growing number of persons who converted to Orthodoxy from other Christian Churches), the new developments in the area of religious education and liturgical life, and grassroots movements encouraging greater Orthodox unity have increasingly affected the position of the Orthodox Churches on the American religious and social scene.

Religious faith and ethnic identity, once seen as inseparable, are no more understood as such by the socially mobile, geographically dispersed, English speaking second, third and fourth generations of Orthodox in America, not to mention an ever-increasing number of Orthodox converts raised in other religious traditions. Today, the question of their changing identity and mission in the US is one of the most urgent issues facing most American Orthodox Churches.

Cultural context: strength of ethnic heritage and its implications for American Orthodox Churches

Do Orthodox Churches in the United States remain "ethnically-based" communities or have they become "All-American" churches? This is probably the most frequently-debated issue in the American Orthodox Christian community.

In the summer of 2005, the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute — a pan-Orthodox educational center in Berkeley, California (www.orthodoxinstitute.org) — administered an extensive "Orthodox Parish Needs Survey." This study examined various aspects of the religious and social lives of Orthodox Christian parishes situated in the western US. The questionnaires were sent to 258 parishes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, Orthodox Church in America, Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, and the Serbian Orthodox

Church in the USA. In each parish, four key-informants, the senior clergy, parish council president, Sunday school coordinator and choir director, who form the leadership of a parish, were requested to complete questionnaire. The results of the "Parish Needs Survey" (Krindatch 2005) allowed to compare the strength of the ethnic identity factor in four major — as to the number of their adherents — American Orthodox Churches

Firstly, it should be noted that today these four American Orthodox jurisdictions maintain their ethnic heritage to a very different degree. One of the questions in the survey asked, "How well does the statement 'Our parish has strong ethnic heritage (Greek, Slavic, Middle-Eastern, Serbian, etc.) that we are trying to preserve' describe your parish?" Table 2 shows that the proportion of parishes with strong ethnic identity varies from 6% in the Orthodox Church in America to 50% in the Serbian Orthodox Church in the USA.

Table 2: How well does the statement "Our parish has a strong ethnic heritage (Greek, Slavic, Middle Eastern, Serbian) that we are trying to preserve" describe your parish? (% of respondents in each Church)

Orthodox Churches included in the study	**Quite well**	Somewhat	Not at all
Orthodox Church in America (OCA)	**3**	36	61
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	**19**	38	43
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (GOA)	**35**	49	16
Serbian Orthodox Church in the USA	**50**	33	17

Are American Orthodox jurisdictions — especially those which remain largely "ethnically based" — concerned with the goal to become more ethnically and culturally diverse? In order to answer this question, one can compare two figures: the proportion of parishes which reported "Our parish has a strong ethnic heritage that we are trying to preserve" and the proportion of parishes saying that the statement "Our parish is trying to increase its ethnic and cultural diversity" describes them "quite well."

Fig.1 shows that in two cases — in the Orthodox Church in America and the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese — there are more parishes that are trying to increase their ethnic and cultural diversity than those which have a strong ethnic identity. On the

contrary, in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and in the Serbian Orthodox Church, the parishes which cherish their ethnic traditions outnumber the parishes which are trying to become "All American" churches.

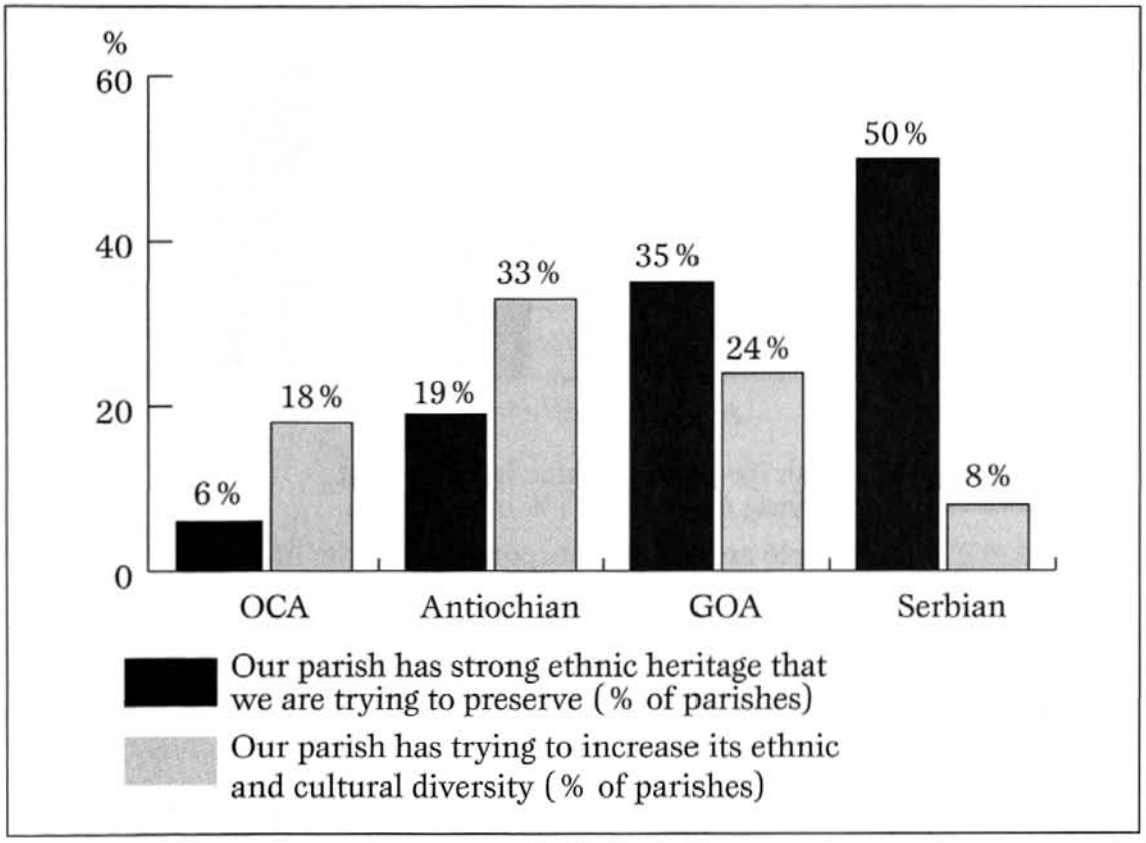

Fig. 1: Proportion (%) of parishes reporting that the statements describe them "quite well"

The emphasis on maintaining a strong ethnic heritage or, on the contrary, the deliberate attempts to increase ethnic and cultural diversity, may have serious implications for the parish's future, and, in particular, for the possibility to attract new members.

Indeed, the results of the "Parish Needs Survey" indicate that the Orthodox Churches with the high proportion of "ethnically based" parishes (the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, the Serbian Orthodox Church), have significantly less parishes where "New people are easily incorporated into the life of our parish" compared to "All-American" Orthodox jurisdictions such as the "Orthodox Church in America" or the "Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese." (see Fig. 2)

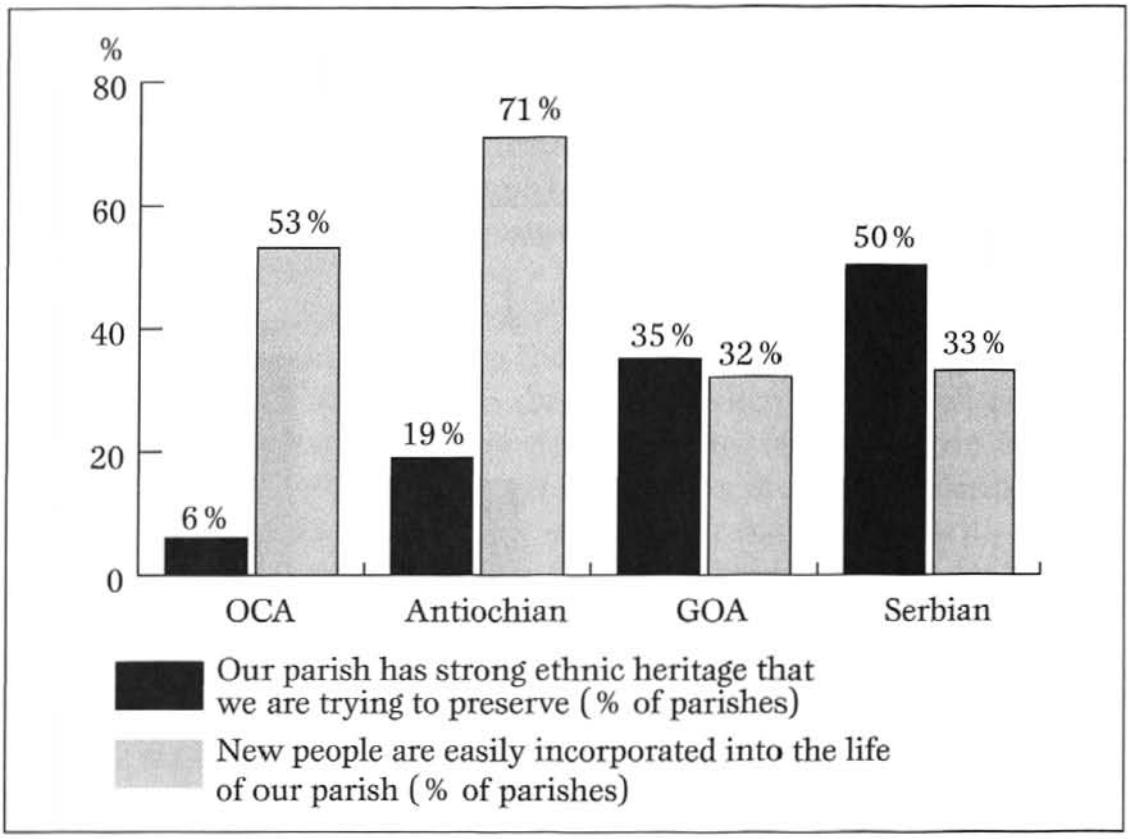

Fig.2: Proportion (%) of parishes reporting that the statements describe them "quite well"

Another challenging question which needs to be addressed is: "Are American Orthodox Churches concerned with the goal of reaching out into mainstream American society and into the wider local community?" Based on results of the "Parish Needs Survey," the answer to this question is "Yes." At the same time, the local Orthodox parishes need a great deal of assistance in achieving this goal.

"To what extent does your parish need assistance in each of the following areas?" was one of the key questions in the Survey. The respondents were given fifteen possible areas of needed assistance, and could choose between three answers indicating that they needed assistance "to a great extent," or "to some extent," or "to a very small extent." The respondents most frequently chose the issue of "Evangelism and outreach into the wider local community" as an area in which their parishes need assistance to a "great extent." Forty-three percent of all respondents reported that their parishes needed great assistance in dealing with "Evangelism and outreach into the wider

community" and this issue came as a top-ranking concern in all four Orthodox jurisdictions participating in the Survey. (see Tab. 3)

Table 3: Percentage of respondents reporting that their parishes need "to a great extent" assistance in the following areas

	All parishes	GOA (1)	OCA (2)	Ant (3)	Serb (4)
Evangelism and outreach into wider local community	**42**	**44**	**41**	**24**	**58**
Theological education of the adult parish members	36	43	6	19	64
Financial assistance	35	38	35	19	42
Enhancing group specific ministries: programs for senior members, family counseling, etc.	34 33	42	12	14	42
Leadership development for laity	29	41	6	14	42
Working with youths	25	30	29	21	42
Developing and implementing a vision/strategic plan	24	26	12	14	58
Mission and mission interpretation	23	29	6	14	33
Enhancing worship, preaching, spirituality.	20	29	6	5	33
Leadership development for clergy	19	24	12	9	25
Ecumenical involvement with other Christian churches	17	24	12	5	17
Information and communication about various issues in the other Orthodox parishes	17 16	19	6	10	25
Dealing with increasing diversity in parish membership	16	21	6	0	33
Conflict resolution within the parish		18	23	5	8
Dealing with changes in parish life		16	23	5	25

(1) – parishes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
(2) – parishes of the Orthodox Church in America
(3) – parishes of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
(4) – parishes of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the USA

Further, Tab.3 shows also that the highest proportion of parishes reporting a great need for assistance in the sphere of "Evangelism and outreach into wider local community" is typical for those Orthodox jurisdictions where the strength of ethnic sentiments is still relatively strong: the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Hence, the message seems to be clear: at the beginning of the third millennium, the quest for ways to reach out into the wider community and into mainstream of American society is seen as one of the most urgent issues in all four major American Orthodox Churches.

The American parish clergy and their attitudes towards innovations and democracy in Church life

A close reading of Orthodox history demonstrates a remarkable flexibility and adaptability in the life of the Church (Taft 2006). Nevertheless, the commonly shared stereotype is that Orthodox Christianity praises adherence to tradition and emphasizes continuity and stability in Church life. Indeed, generally, changes and innovations in the Orthodox Church are accepted rather grudgingly: only if proven absolutely necessary and properly approved by Church hierarchy. This distinct feature of Orthodox Christianity is seen by many as its major strength, but, under certain circumstances, it can pose a major challenge or even threat for the Church's future. In the American context, there are two difficult questions that the Church needs to answer: how to keep a proper balance between a supposedly once-and-forever established tradition and dynamically-changing social realities; and how to adapt the assumingly Orthodox universal traditions and rules to the various local realities in which the Orthodox Church functions. Further, in the US, these questions are especially urgent for three reasons.

Firstly, Orthodox Christianity in America is a minority religious culture. Being a minority, and in order to avoid social marginalization, the Orthodox community has in many ways to compromise and to comply with the mainstream American culture. Accordingly, the hierarchs, clergy and lay leaders alike cannot simply pretend that, for instance, such issues as the ordination of women or of same-sex marriage among Church members are not present. True, in the past, the strong ethnic identity and the sense of close-knit community — both culturally and religiously distinct from the wider American society — allowed Orthodox Churches to maintain established patterns of church life, to avoid changes and to expect taken-for-granted obedience of their faithful. Today, with the strength of ethno-cultural values and sentiments having declined significantly, the Orthodox Churches cannot count anymore on this factor or on the "unconditional" loyalty of their members.

Secondly, in the US, the strong notion of religious pluralism has been historically one of the foundational principles upon which American society was built. As the prominent sociologist Peter Berger pointed out, the conditions of an ever-expanding market of religious

options force American churches to compete in retaining or gaining the adherence of the free-to-choose population. And this task proved to be especially difficult for churches with a claim to exclusive authority and a history of relying on the state to enforce a religious monopoly, which to a large degree was the case of Orthodoxy. On the level of individual religious consciousness, religious pluralism means the shift from religion as a taken-for-granted (or inherited) reality to religion as a matter of personal voluntary and deliberate choice (Berger 2003:34).

Put differently, in America, it would be seen as socially perfectly acceptable for an Orthodox person to abandon the Church which rejects any innovations and which is unwilling to meet changing expectations and aspirations of the new generations of her faithful.

Thirdly, the notion of an unquestionable hierarchical authority and a highly centralized church administration are fundamental for the Orthodox Church. For a number of historical reasons, however, the factor of "congregationalism" has been always present in American Orthodox parishes to a much greater extent than in the "Old Lands of Orthodoxy." According to Fr. Tomas Hopko, the former dean of the St.Vladimir's Orthodox seminary, "Orthodox parishes and dioceses in North America today are *voluntary associations* of like-minded Orthodox Christians organized for purposes *determined by their members.*" The reality is that "a parish belongs to the diocese of its choice, most often *on its own terms.* In some cases in North America, parishes considering themselves Orthodox have not belonged to any diocese at all, or have belonged only nominally to insure a minimal measure of legitimacy for their ecclesiastical statush (Hopko 2003:1-2). The "congregationalism" — as a distinct feature of American Orthodox parishes — has its roots in the ways many parishes were founded. Generally, most parishes in the US were not and are not created by the hierarchy of the Church. Rather, it is typically a group of lay people who organize a community and church, then petition for reception into a particular jurisdiction. At the beginning of the 20th century this was much "looser" than the current situation, but still today the process is essentially the same (although a founding group of laity may approach the bishop earlier in the process). Finally, in many parts of the US, the "congregationalism" and the significant local autonomy of the American Orthodox parishes are further augmented by significant geographic distances and by the scant communications between them and their diocesan centers. Overall, in the US, the individual parishes

have relative flexibility and freedom in making decisions locally about patterns of their social and religious lives and about either embracing certain innovations or avoiding any changes in the Church.

Because of these circumstances, the personalities of the parish priests and their individual attitudes towards various Church matters and social issues play much greater role in "shaping" local Orthodox parishes in America than in the Old World.

The recent study "Evolving Visions of the Orthodox Priesthood in America" (Krindatch 2006) completed by the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute, provided many insights into the question: "Who are the American Orthodox clergy?" Based on a national survey of the priests in the two largest American Orthodox jurisdictions — the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North America (GOA) and the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) — this study is to large degree reflective of the whole of American Orthodox priesthood.

Typically, in the Old Lands of Orthodoxy, a significant number of clergy is composed of celibate priests or priest-monks. In America, quite differently, only a tiny minority (6%) of clergy belongs to this category, and there is no difference in this respect between the GOA and the OCA. This characteristic feature of American Orthodox priesthood — a small proportion of celibate clergy eligible to be bishops — presents a certain problem for the Church, because it dramatically limits the potential pool of candidates for leadership positions "reserved" for bishops.

The age composition of American Orthodox clergy is quite healthy: about one third (30%) are persons younger than 45 years, a dominant majority (54%) are the priests in the age group of 45-64 years, and only 16% are "seniors" who still serve full-time as the parish priests. The average age of the American Orthodox clergy is 51 years, and, again, there is little difference in this respect between the GOA and the OCA.

The GOA and OCA clergy, however, are distinct in two ways: by the extent of the presence of converts (those who were born and raised in the other non-Orthodox Christian traditions) and by the proportion of first-generation immigrants (those who were born outside the US). A dominant majority (59%) of the OCA priests are converts in comparison with only 14% in the case of GOA.

Table 4: Replies to "What was your Church affiliation before you became an Orthodox Christian?"
(% of priests)

	I have always been Orthodox Christian	**I am a convert, including:**	Former Catholics	Former Liberal Protest.	Former Moderate Protestant	Former Evangelical Protestant	Former Agnostics
GOA, %	**86**	**14**	6	0	3	4	1
OCA, %	**41**	**59**	20	3	12	18	6
Total, %	**65**	**35**	13	1	7	11	3

On the contrary, there are many more first-generation immigrants among the GOA priests (25%) than among the OCA clergy (10%). Predictably, most of the immigrant clergy in the GOA are persons born in Greece and the Middle-East (20% of all priests). In the OCA (with its Slavic and Russian roots), the priests from Eastern Europe and the former USSR (6% of all priests) dominate among the foreign-born clergy.

These differences between the GOA and the OCA clergy reflect the various strengths of the ethnic heritage currently present in these two largest American Orthodox churches — a subject discussed in the previous part.

All American Orthodox Churches share the same theology and doctrine, but — as noted earlier — the actual approaches of the Orthodox priests to various aspects of church life as well as to different social issues can vary greatly from parish to parish. Based on their personal varied understandings of Orthodox doctrine and traditions, Orthodox clergy organize the social and religious lives of their parishes, and interact with the outside non-Orthodox community, in very different ways.

How wide is the gap between "liberal" and "conservative" wings in American Orthodox priesthood? How influential are each of these wings? What are the implications of these theologically-based divisions for the lives of the local parishes? In order to approach these questions we used the hypothesis proposed by Dr. Anton C. Vrame, the director of the Department of Religious Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (Vrame 2008).

Vrame suggests four types of "orthopraxy" — the way Orthodox individuals and communities live out their religious values and behave

socially been influenced by their religious attitudes. These four types of religiously-motivated behavior are generally based on the degree of willingness to accept or, on the contrary, reject changes and innovations:

- *Conservative (Fundamentalist) Orthopraxy.* It rejects changes and emphasizes the exactness of once and forever developed practices, in spite of changing local contexts. It also separates itself deliberately and eagerly from mainstream American culture.
- *Traditional Orthopraxy.* It strives to observe Orthodox tradition and immensely cherishes church heritage, but also accepts evolutionary changes, permitting praxis to evolve slowly over time.
- *Moderate (Reform) Orthopraxy.* It supports intentional changes and is willing to "fit in" and be "accepted" by the wider American society and by mainstream American religious life.
- *Liberal (Reconstructionist) Orthopraxy.* It seeks to introduce "innovative" practices, to generally "rethink" orthopraxy and to develop a new expression for America.

The survey "Evolving Visions of the Orthodox Priesthood in America" asked the question to priests "When you think about your theological position and approach to church life, which word best describes where you stand?" The priests were given choices to identify themselves as "conservative," "traditional," "moderate," and "liberal." The survey results (see Fig. 3) allow several important conclusions.

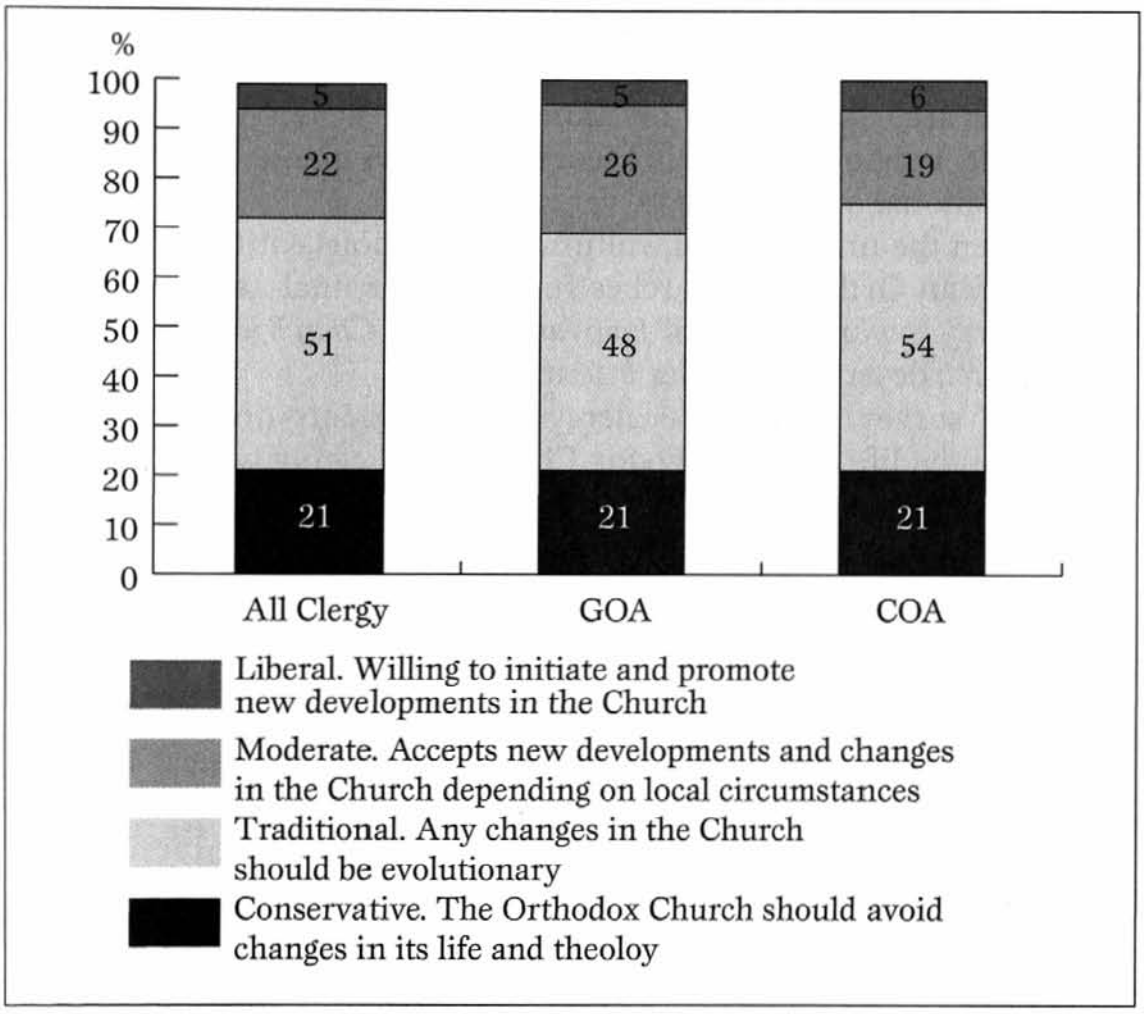

Fig. 3: When you think about your theological position and approach to church life, which word best describes where you stand? (% of priests)

Firstly, one can see that a "reform oriented" group among American Orthodox clergy is relatively small, in comparison with the much stronger faction of priests who are keen to "keep the things the way they are." Indeed, only 27% of the priests identified themselves as either liberal (5%) or moderate (22%) in comparison with almost three-quarters of respondents who said they are either traditional (51%) or conservative (21%).

Secondly, two major American Orthodox jurisdictions — the GOA and OCA — are very similar in terms of how present are these four groups among their priests. Further analysis of the survey results also indicated that there is little difference among the various generations of the priests or between the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy as to the proportion of persons who identified themselves as

either "liberal," or "moderate," or "traditional," or "conservative." Put differently, the fact that some clergy are "liberal" or "moderate" while the others are "traditional" or "conservative" is not related to the priests' age, religious upbringing (converts *versus* cradle Orthodox), or "denominational culture" (GOA versus OCA).

Given the unique social, cultural and religious contexts in which the American Orthodox Churches function, personal attitudes of the parish clergy towards issues of *Innovations in the Church* and *Democracy in the Church* deserve particular attention.

The survey offered the clergy six statements on the possible changes in the life of the Orthodox Church. The clergy were given five possible options to respond to these statements: "strongly agree," "somewhat agree," "neutral/unsure," "somewhat disagree," "strongly disagree." The proportion of priests who "strongly agreed" or "somewhat agreed" with these statements is shown in Tab. 5.

The first two statements touch similar problems: greater freedom for the local parishes to experiment with forms of liturgical life and greater freedom for individual Orthodox believers to interpret Scripture and Tradition. Both statements challenge the strong hierarchical church authority and necessity to get approval from the bishops for any such innovations. They alas reflect a more individualized approach to faith, more commonly found in American Protestant Churches.

Very few of both the GOA (14%) and the OCA (15%) priests agreed that "Orthodox Church should allow its local parishes more freedom to explore new forms and patterns of liturgical life." In other words, only a tiny minority of the clergy feels the need for greater freedom to experiment and to decide locally about innovations in liturgy. Not surprisingly, even fewer priests (6% in GOA and 4% in OCA) supported the statement that "All Orthodox Christians should have the individual freedom to interpret Scripture and Orthodox Tradition for themselves and be tolerant of differing interpretations." We conclude that a vast majority of parish clergy wants to keep the current situation in which experimentation with liturgical life or interpretation of Scripture is largely seen as a prerogative of the Church hierarchs.

The remaining four statements deal with the issue of who is eligible to enter the priesthood: either as deacons or as priests or as bishops. Clergy responses to the statement "I think it would be a good

Table 5: Proportion (%) of American Orthodox Clergy who Agreed with the Statements on Possible Innovations in the Orthodox Church

Statements on Innovations in the Orthodox Church	% who agree with these statements
1. "Orthodox Church should allow its local parishes more freedom to explore new forms and patterns of liturgical life."	
All clergy	15%
GOA clergy	14%
OCA clergy	15%
2. "All Orthodox Christians should have the individual freedom to interpret Scriptures and Orthodox Tradition for themselves and be tolerant of different interpretations "	
All clergy	5%
GOA clergy	6%
OCA clergy	4%
3. "I think it would be a good idea if women were ordained to the deaconate"	
All clergy	31%
GOA clergy	36%
OCA clergy	25%
4. "I think it would be a good idea if marriage could happen after ordination"	
All clergy	16%
GOA clergy	20%
OCA clergy	13%
5. "I think it would be a good idea if priests could re-marry after becoming a widower or after divorces"	
All clergy	26%
GOA clergy	35%
OCA clergy	16%
6. "I think it would be a good idea if bishops could be selected from among married clergy in addition to celibate clergy"	
All clergy	46%
GOA clergy	57%
OCA clergy	34%

idea if women were ordained to deaconate" show that less than one-third of all clergy (36% among GOA and 25% among OCA priests) would allow women to enter even the lowest rank of priesthood and to serve in the Church as deacons (despite that it being well-known that was part of Orthodox practice for centuries).

The Orthodox Church has two basic rules regulating relationship between marital status and eligibility for the priesthood. The first rule is that a man must marry prior to his ordination to the deaconate, if he

plans to be married at all. The alternative is that one can also be ordained after taking vows of celibacy. In any case, however, bachelors (e.g. somebody who still considers marriage in the future) cannot enter priesthood. As a result, in America, there is a number of young seminary graduates qualified and desiring to become priests who are unable to be ordained because they have not yet found their mate and who do not want to remain celibate. The second requirement is that divorced or widowed clergy (priests and deacons) cannot remarry. The negative outcome of this rule is obvious: if a divorced or widowed priest enters openly a new relationship and marries, he would normally be expected to leave the priesthood.

The statements "I think it would be a good idea if marriage could happen after ordination" and "I think it would be a good idea if priests could re-marry after becoming a widower or after divorces" voice the abandonment of these two requirements. However restrictive these rules are, only one quarter of clergy (26%) would allow divorced or widowed priests to re-marry. An even smaller proportion (16%) feel that requirement to be married prior to ordination is unnecessary.

Two nuances, however, should be noted. Firstly, our study examined only approaches of the clergy who are currently in "good standing." We did not ask opinions of the persons who happened to be on the "other side of the barricade:" the young seminary graduates who are forced to postpone ordination until their marriage and the priests who were divorced. Secondly, there were many more GOA (35%) than OCA (16%) members of the clergy who would allow divorced and widowed priests to be re-married.

The last statement ("I think it would be a good idea if bishops could be selected from among married clergy in addition to celibate clergy") challenges current requirement of celibacy to be eligible to the highest rank in the Orthodox Church. As noted earlier, in American Orthodox Churches (where the proportion of celibate clergy is very low), this requirement resulted in an acute shortage of worthy candidates who could be considered to fill the most important and influential positions in the Church. And it is an historical fact that for the first seven centuries of Christian history, bishops were selected from both the married and monastic clergy. According to the Survey, almost half of the parish clergy (46%) feel that the rule about required celibacy for the bishops should be changed, but there is a significant difference between the approaches of the OCA and GOA priests.

In comparison with only one third of OCA clergy (34%), a clear majority of Greek Orthodox priests (57%) agreed with the statement "I think it would be a good idea if bishops could be selected from among married clergy in addition to celibate clergy."

To conclude, GOA and OCA priests expressed very similar — and rather negative — opinions on first two statements regarding the possibility of a greater freedom for local parishes to experiment with liturgical life and a greater freedom for individual believers to interpret Scripture. At the same time, in the case of the four statements dealing with the eligibility to the priesthood, the Greek Orthodox clergy were more in favor of suggested possible changes than the OCA priests.

What about age differences? Are younger priests more inclined to experiment and to promote changes and innovations in the Church? The results of the study tell us that the general answer on this question is "No." There were no significant age differences in responses to the statements about greater freedom for the local parishes to experiment with forms of liturgical life and about greater freedom for individuals to interpret Scripture. The younger (under 45), middle-aged (45-64) and the older (65 years and older) clergy alike were almost equally reluctant to agree with these statements.

The statement about the possibility of women ordination to the deaconate scored stronger support among middle-aged clergy (36% of priests in the age bracket 45-64 agreed with this statement) than between both the younger (24%) and older (23%) priests. In the case of the last three statements, there was the same clear pattern. The younger priests under 45 years were significantly less supportive of ordination prior to marriage, of remarriage of divorced and widowed clergy, and of allowing married clergy to become bishops than the middle-aged (45-64) and senior priests (65 and older). Put differently, the younger American Orthodox clergy maintain somewhat more traditional and conservative attitudes on changes and innovations in the Church than the generations of their fathers and grandfathers.

The study found also out that the opinions of the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy on six possible innovations in the Church were astonishingly alike.

In comparison with relatively small distinctions between the GOA and OCA clergy, between various generations of priests and between cradle Orthodox and convert clergy, the *theological stance of the priests* — their self-identification as being either "conservative," or

"traditional," or "moderate," or "liberal" — is the strongest predictor for the differences in responses to the statements about changes and innovations in the Church. Fig. 4 shows that the clergy who identified themselves as "liberal" and "moderate" were much more likely to agree with all six statements than the "traditional" or, especially, "conservative" priests. Further, the responses of "traditional" and "conservative" clergy were relatively similar to each other but clearly distinct from the answers of "liberal" and "moderate" priests. Put differently, in their approaches to various innovations and changes in the Church, the "conservatives" and "traditionalists" are largely in the same camp, while attitudes of "liberals" and "moderates" put them far away from the dominant group of American Orthodox clergy.

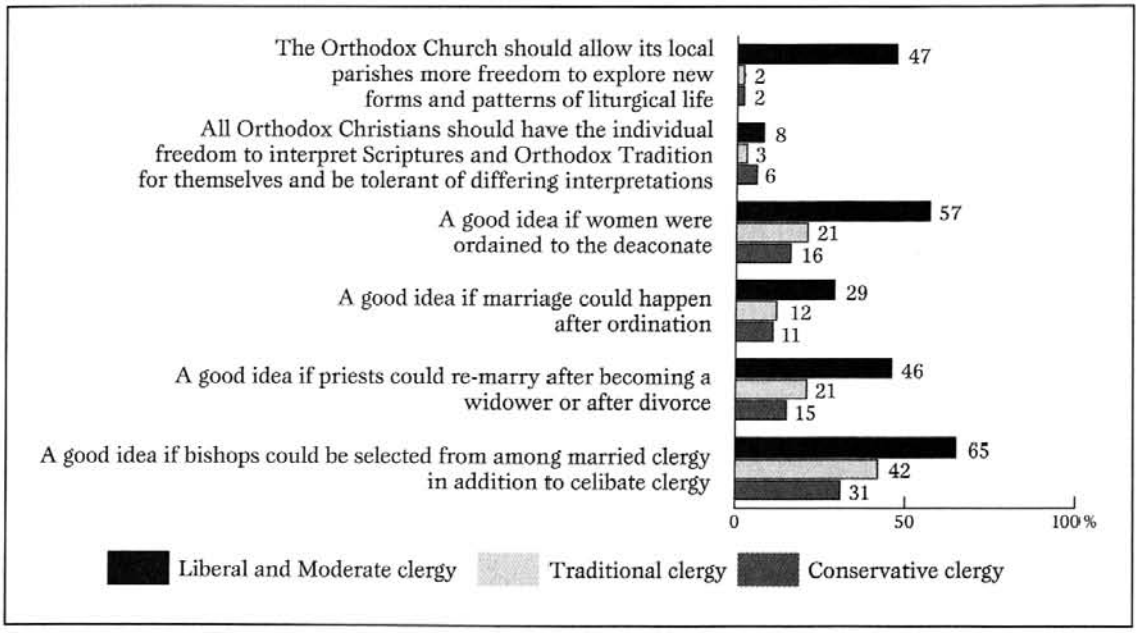

Figure 4: Theological Stance of the Clergy and Their Attitudes to Changes and Innovations in Church (% of priests with various theological approaches who "agreed strongly" or "rather agreed" with the statements)

Seven statements explored opinions of clergy on the broad subject of Democracy in the Church. The percentages of the OCA and GOA clergy who agreed, either strongly or somewhat, with these statements are in the following table.

Table 6: Proportion (%) of American Orthodox Clergy who Agreed with the Statements on Democracy in the Orthodox Church

Statements on Democracy in the Orthodox Church	% who agree with these statements
1. "Orthodox Church needs to move faster in empowering lay persons in ministry."	
All clergy	56%
GOA clergy	60%
OCA clergy	51%
2. "I think it would be a good idea if the priests in a diocese were to choose their own bishop"	
All clergy	46%
GOA clergy	38%
OCA clergy	54%
3. "I think it is a good idea if Orthodox parishes were to choose their own priest from among available ordained priests"	
All clergy	19%
GOA clergy	12%
OCA clergy	17%
4. "To be truly Orthodox Christian, one must accept without question all teaching and requirements of Orthodox Church"	
All clergy	62%
GOA clergy	66%
OCA clergy	58%
5. "In case of disagreements with parish laity, priests should have final authority in the parish."	
All clergy	60%
GOA clergy	58%
OCA clergy	61%
6. "I am willing to tolerate different viewpoints on Church life in my parish even if it spills over into conflict sometimes."	
All clergy	41%
GOA clergy	37%
OCA clergy	45%
7. "The Orthodox parish is like a family: people shouldn't even think about leaving with the intent to pick and choose another parish."	
All clergy	58%
GOA clergy	58%
OCA clergy	59%

In American Orthodoxy, and unlike most other Christian Churches (Roman Catholic and Protestant), laity has relatively "little say" in comparison with clergy. Similarly, the idea of sharing in ministry with the laity is less accepted among American Orthodox

priests than among the Catholic and Protestant clergy. At this point, there is no established practice of *professional lay* ministers in American Orthodox churches. Therefore, it was important to find out that the majority of both GOA and OCA priests support an idea of a more proactive involvement of people in Church life. Indeed, 56% of all clergy agreed with the statement "The Orthodox Church needs to move faster in empowering lay persons in ministry" (20% disagreed and 24% were neutral or unsure).

While GOA and OCA clergy are similar in their opinions on the possibility of greater sharing in ministry with laity, they differ significantly in the approach to the sensitive topic of who should choose bishops for a diocese. Today, this procedure varies from one American Orthodox church to another. In the GOA, a list of three candidates for an open diocesan seat is composed by the American synod of Greek Orthodox Bishops. This list is submitted to the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople who resides in Istanbul. The Synod of Bishops in Istanbul elects one of the three proposed candidates or it can also suggest a different name. In the OCA, the process of consecration and appointment of a bishop is entirely under control of its American-based bishops. In both jurisdictions, however, laity or parish clergy have little influence on electing the bishops.

We learned from the survey that a majority of OCA priests (54%) feel that diocesan bishops should be chosen by the clergy in a diocese, but only 38% of Greek Orthodox priests agreed with the statement "I think it would be a good idea if the priests in a diocese were to choose their own bishop." Similarly, compared to GOA priests, twice as many OCA clergy supported the idea of choosing the parish priests by parishioners (12% and 27% respectively agreed with the statement "I think it would be a good idea if Orthodox parishes were to choose their own priests from among available ordained priests"). It should be noted, however, that both in the GOA and OCA the group of priests who wish to elect their own bishops is much larger than the number of clergy who would let parishioners pick and choose their parish priests.

The survey also tells us that — in spite of their declared willingness to share in ministry with the laity — a dominant majority of both GOA and OCA clergy remain quite authoritarian in their attitudes to the organization of local Church life. Not only most of them agree with the general statement "To be truly Orthodox Christian, one must accept without question all teachings and requirements of

Orthodox Church" (66% GOA and 58% OCA priests), but they also believe that "In the case of disagreements with parish laity, priests should have final authority in the parish:" this is the position of 58% GOA and 61% OCA clergy. Conversely, less than half of the GOA (37%) and OCA (45%) priests said that they were "willing to tolerate different viewpoints on Church life in my parish even if it spills over into conflict sometimes." The fact that most clergy adhere to an idea of humble obedience on the part of parishioners was also confirmed by their strong agreement to the statement "The Orthodox parish is like a family: people shouldn't even think about leaving with the intent to "pick-and-choose" another parish" (this was opinion of 58% GOA and 59% OCA clergy).

The picture of age differences in the attitudes of clergy to the subject of Democracy in the Church is somewhat inconsistent. On the one hand, the younger (under 45 years) clergy showed more conservative approaches, and they were less likely to agree than the middle-aged (45-64) and, especially, older clergy (older than 65 years) with the three statements: "The Orthodox Church needs to move faster in empowering lay persons in ministry," "I think it would be a good idea if the priests in a diocese were to choose their own bishop," and "I think it is a good idea if Orthodox parishes were to choose their own priest from among available ordained priests." At the same time, the younger clergy are less keen than the older priests to emphasize the voiceless obedience by the laity of church rules. Indeed, in comparison with the clergy 65 years and older, fewer priests in the age bracket 45-64 and younger than 45 years agreed with the statements "To be truly Orthodox Christian, one must accept without question all teachings and requirements of Orthodox Church" (71%, 63% and 55% respectively), and "In the case of disagreements with parish laity, priests should have final authority in the parish" (66%, 57%, 54%), and "The Orthodox parish is like a family: people shouldn't even think about leaving with the intent to "pick-and-choose" another parish" (74%, 57% and 53%).

A partial explanation for these contradictory patterns could be the fact that the younger clergy — who have less experience and authority in the Church — prefer to be on the "safe side." They are less likely to challenge openly the established rules on the national Church level (the statements about sharing in ministry with laity, about electing bishops and priests) than more influential and outspoken senior priests. At the same time, when asked about their opinions about patterns of

life in their local parishes, the younger clergy were more inclined to a *de facto* share of authority with laity and to allow parishioners to pick-and-choose the parish which would be most satisfactory for them, while the older and more experienced priests believe more strongly in the superior authority of a priest and in the implicit submission to this authority of the people in pews.

It also should be emphasized that in spite of the noted generational differences, the priests who expressed authoritarian attitudes to the norms of the local parish life (the three last statements in Tab. 6) comprise an absolute majority in all age groups of clergy.

There was only one difference in responses to the statements about Democracy in the Church between cradle Orthodox and convert clergy: significantly more convert (50%) than cradle Orthodox (35%) priests said that they were "willing to tolerate different viewpoints on Church life in my parish even if it spills over into conflict sometimes." We think this reflects the differences in the social upbringing between converts (who grew up in mainstream individualistic American culture with the inherited notion of everybody's equal right to hold his own opinion and willingness to negotiate the disagreements) and the cradle Orthodox (who more likely grew in the communities where ideas and rules are expected to be commonly shared by everybody).

Similarly to the subject of Innovations in the Church, there is a clear and strong relationship between theological stance of the clergy and their approaches to the various issues connected with Democracy in the Church. (See Fig. 5)

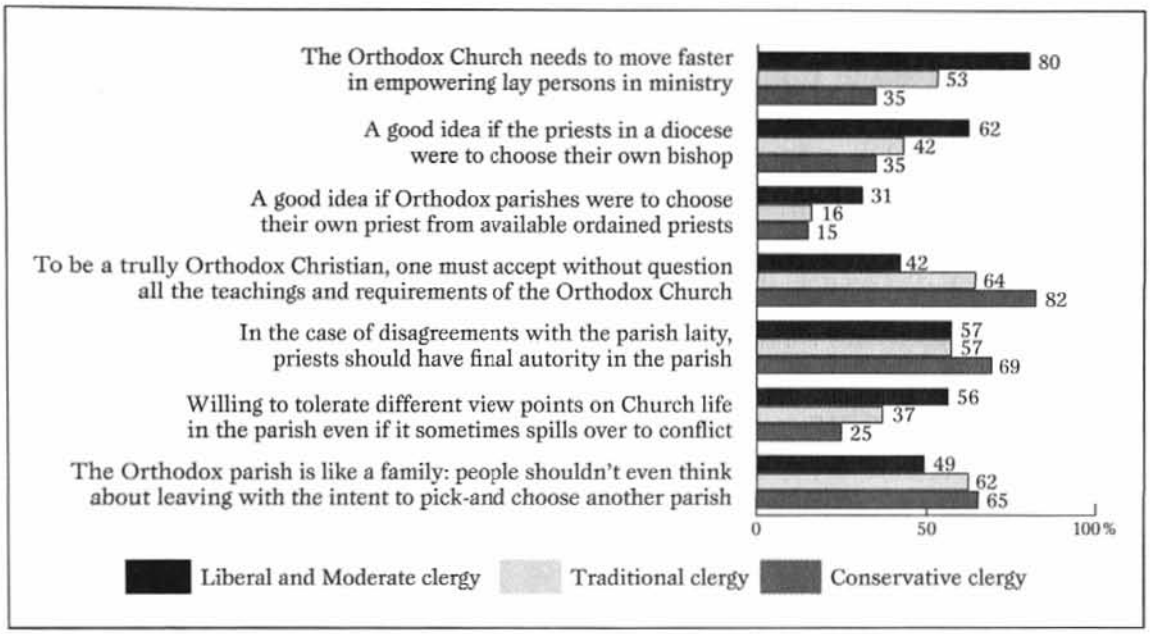

Fig. 5: Theological Stance of the Clergy
and Their Attitudes to Democracy in the Church
(% of priests with various theological approaches
who "agreed strongly" and "rather agreed" with the statements)

Predictably, in comparison with the "moderate" and "liberal" clergy, priests who defined their theological position and approaches to the Church life as "conservative" or "traditional" were much less likely to support statements about empowering laity in ministry, electing bishops and parish priests, and tolerating different viewpoints in a local parish. On the contrary, much fewer "moderate" and "liberal" than "traditional" and "conservative" clergy agreed with the statements "To be truly Orthodox Christian, one must accept without question all teachings and requirements of Orthodox Church," "In case of disagreements with laity, priests should have final authority in the parish," and "The Orthodox parish is like a family: people shouldn't even think about leaving with the intent to pick-and-choose another parish." However, even among "moderate" and "liberal" clergy, the absolute majority of priests believe in the implicit superior authority of clergy over laity in the local parish: 57% of liberal and moderate priests agreed with the statement "In case of disagreements with parish laity, priests should have final authority in the parish."

To conclude, clergy responses to the statements about Democracy in the Church show that majority of American Orthodox priests *do not* feel that Church is about democracy: they do not support ideas of electing parish clergy by laity; they require voiceless obedience from the faithful to the established rules in Church in general and in their own parishes; they do not favor the presence of different opinions in their parishes and the right of the laity to pick-and-choose the parish which would suit them the best.

Some afterthoughts

Several circumstances make the "American experience" of Orthodox Christianity very distinct from Orthodoxy in the "Old World."

Firstly, the Orthodox Churches in America exist in a situation of cultural and religious pluralism, which is historically rather unusual for them. Indeed, Orthodox Christianity in the USA is not a tradition which symbolizes national unity and solidifies a particular national or ethnic identity. Rather, it exists among many other equally "valid" Christian communities and non-Christian faith groups. It also exists in a society where an idea of choosing and changing religious affiliation by an individual is socially perfectly acceptable and increasingly common.

Secondly, Orthodoxy in America has multiple faces due to the existence of multiple Orthodox jurisdictions divided along ethnic lines. Besides, an ever growing presence of converts from other Christian churches and religious traditions among both Orthodox laity and clergy (including entire former Protestant congregations that "turned-to-be" Orthodox parishes) breaks the mosaic of the local expressions of American Orthodox Christianity into even smaller pieces.

Thirdly, as Aristotle Papanikolau pointed out, the inability to adapt to the situation of American cultural pluralism has led to an increasing fragmentation of American Orthodoxy both on the level of the institutional Orthodox churches and on that of individual Orthodox Christians. In other words, "indeterminacies, internal strains and conflicts are evident in Orthodoxy in America in the sheer diverse number of interpretations of what it means to be an Orthodox Christian through the eclectic appropriations of traditional Orthodox Christian beliefs, rituals and symbols by those who choose to maintain some affiliation with Orthodox identity. Indeed, within the Orthodox

churches in America you have diverse interpretations and appropriations of the traditions that lead to diverse theologies that span the spectrum of the extremes of the so-called "Culture Wars." (Papanikolau 2008).

To conclude, Orthodox Christianity in American pluralistic society has and will have to compete with other religious and secular options easily available in the US' vast cultural marketplace. Under these circumstances, the future of American Orthodox churches depends both on the sensitivity to their public image and their "conversational skills" with mainstream America, and, at the same time, on the firm adherence to their particularity, their established tradition and their unique message.

October 2007

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